

hearings and the opportunity to deliberate and add amendments to the bill so we can put forward to the American people important and vital and serious and valuable legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the American people are not expecting us to be the "do-nothing" Congress. They, frankly, want us to do our jobs.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. PORTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PORTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WIND FOR ELECTRICITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I represent San Diego, California, which is undergoing a tremendous crisis in terms of the price that we pay for electricity. In the last 3 months, prices have doubled and tripled. And while we have a short-term cap on those prices, we are looking to Congress to bring down the wholesale price of electricity and bring down the rates to consumers and small businesses.

Tonight, I want to speak about the long-range issue of energy and how that affects San Diego and the rest of our Nation. We all know that oil, natural gas, and home heating fuel prices are at a 10-year high. American consumers are facing record increases in domestic energy costs. This past summer households have been hit by soaring electricity rates in California, and motorists have faced astronomical gasoline price hikes. Now, in the coming winter months, high energy prices will affect households throughout the country.

The economic consequences are all too evident to individual consumers

both at home and overseas. In Europe we see gasoline shortages, panic buying, and massive protests over rising prices. Furthermore, the impact does not stop with the individual consumer; the whole Nation bears the consequences. A surge in the price of energy can derail the economic expansion that we have worked so hard to achieve and maintain.

I think we know that energy supplies and prices are indeed cyclical. We have been lulled into inaction by the long downside half of that cycle. Oil and gas have been in adequate supply and the moderate energy prices have made us forget the upside of that cycle. The energy crises of the 1970s and 1980s are forgotten history. Consequently, we have failed to implement policies to increase our energy supplies and to promote stable prices. We have steadily grown more dependent on conventional and imported energy. Congress has done very little to protect the Nation from the inevitable upswing in that cycle.

In particular, we have failed to support the development of alternative energy resources. In terms of domestic resource potential, wind energy is the most overlooked fuel source in this Nation. This resource is available in almost every State and can be utilized for electric generation more quickly than any other energy resource. Although California has been a leader, other States, such as Wyoming, Wisconsin, Vermont, Texas, Pennsylvania, Oregon, New York, Minnesota and Iowa, are beginning to utilize their wind energy resources. The use of wind power for electric generation is slowly growing.

Compared with the tax incentives for conventional nuclear energy, Federal tax support for renewable energy resources, such as wind, is relatively small. Aside from accelerated depreciation, which is shared by other fast-evolving technologies, wind facilities now qualify only for a temporary Federal production tax credit. This credit helps provide a price floor, but if the price of wind-generated electricity rises above a certain benchmark, the tax credit phases out and this credit took effect in 1994.

It was originally decided to sunset this credit in June of 1999. But several years after the credit was enacted, Congress considered repealing it when energy prices were at an all-time low. Fortunately, Congress retained the credit and later extended it until 2002. Despite wavering congressional policy, the credit has promoted use of domestic wind energy resources and has promoted technological development.

An uncertain credit and a temporary extension, however, does not support long-term planning, development and construction of electric generation projects. The experience with another credit program proves my point. Between 1986 and 1992, when the section 48 solar and geothermal credit was finally made permanent, Congress extended

this credit in 1-, 2-, and 3-year increments. Sizable projects could not be undertaken because of the short eligibility period; and small short-term projects that were attempted had to be rushed to completion at great cost to meet the qualification deadline. For both policy and practical reasons, the wind production credit should be made permanent, like the credit for solar and geothermal resources.

Our long-time reliance on conventional fuels has created a mindset which ignores alternatives. Mr. Speaker, the resulting institutional practices resist the use of nonconventional energy resources. Power management, transmission, and pricing practices need to adjust to the requirement of utilizing a new alternative resource. With the threat of another energy crisis looming in the future, Congress needs to reassess and redirect our national energy programs.

To spur that analysis and redirection, I have introduced today the Wind for Electricity Act to specifically promote the development of wind energy resources in this Nation. I know that San Diego is looking to this Congress for short-term relief from the high prices of electricity and to long-term alternative energy resources. I hope we all act soon.

RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS SPECIAL ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of serving in this body for 14 years. And during the 14 years, one of the things that I have learned about our colleagues is that we all have a feeling of high regard for each other. If someone is going to say something about another Member, the protocol usually has been that the Member be told about it in advance.

This past Thursday that did not happen, as the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) got up after everyone left Washington, late Thursday, and did a special order for 1 hour; a tirade mentioning a number of Members of Congress. Now, I will not do to him what he did to our colleagues. He only mentioned me briefly, but I told the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) this morning that I would come here personally and respond to the things he said regarding me.

The gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) said that we were too harsh in criticizing the administration for the possibility of having the administration transfer technology to China in return for campaign dollars. He went on to make two specific charges: number one, that the Cox Committee, which I served on, in fact totally exonerated the administration on those allegations; and, number two, that the Justice Department said there was no